

COVID 19 Pandemic and the Library Online Services: SSC Manila High School Librarians' Experiences

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of St. Scholastica's College Manila High School librarians in implementing library online services during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The researcher used a descriptive research design and employed Document Analysis and Thematic Analysis vis-a-vis the respondents' answers on the electronic questionnaires. It was revealed, through this study, that the roles and responsibilities of the SSC Manila HS librarians were technologists, online learning support professionals, instructional partners, and game-based learning developers. On the other hand, they experienced challenges such as having limited transactions and time constraints in delivering library online services and the opportunities of having proactive team culture and providing appropriate and innovative services to their clientele. With these findings, the following are recommended for better library online services of the school libraries and librarians. First, librarians and staff's technical competencies and skills must continuously be honed. Second, the library's online services must also be evaluated annually by the students and faculty members. Third, the librarians and staff must explore more technological applications or apps and learning management systems. Lastly, further research studies are recommended in relation also to delivering library online services that can be in the contexts of other types of libraries, most especially their experiences so that there will be a deeper and bigger understanding of the roles and responsibilities, and the challenges and opportunities of librarians during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

If one visits www.ssc.edu.ph or the official website of St. Scholastica's College (SSC) Manila and will click on the tab "SSC Community" and then "Faculty," one will easily understand that there are five (5) academic units in this institution, namely: Grade School, High School, Night Secondary School, College, and Graduate School. Aside from having the teaching faculty members, each unit has non-teaching faculty members like the librarians. As explained by the Professional Regulatory Commission and endorsed by the [Department of Education \(2011\)](#), thru its DepEd Order 56, series of 2011 entitled "Standards for Philippine Libraries" on the section "Standard III Human Resources-The professional/licensed librarian shall be given a faculty status, with corresponding privilege and other benefits comparable to those of the teaching faculty." Given this status, they are also expected to support the educational goals, same as the teachers, of the academe for the entire school community. According

to [Reitz \(2004\)](#), a librarian is a professionally trained person responsible for the care of a library and its contents, including the selection, processing, and organization of materials and the delivery of information, instruction, and loan services to meet the needs of its users. In the High School unit of St. Scholastica's College Manila, its library users are the students and the faculty members.

Further, the services, roles, and responsibilities of SSC Manila High School librarians are mentioned in its "April 2019 PAASCU (Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities) Executive Summary of Library and Audio-Visual Center" ([p. xxiii](#)). First, the document shows that the High School library (print library) has educational and informative fiction and non-fiction books, journals, and periodicals. In contrast, the Audio-Visual Center or AVC (non-print library) has technologically appropriate DVDs, digital cameras, laptops, and other equipment, open for usage and borrowing their clientele. The librarians can provide library and avc user services for both students and teachers in instructional programs, orientations, and research assistance. The SSC Manila High School librarians' services, roles, and responsibilities are directed to support students' and teachers' curriculum and the teaching-learning process.

Those said practices were being done during face-to-face (f2f) interactions. However, as mentioned in the online article written by [Kandola \(2019\)](#), since December 2019, the novel Coronavirus or COVID 19 pandemic broke out in Wuhan, China. On January 30, 2020, as reported by the [World Health Organization \(2020\)](#), the Philippine Department of Health reported the first case of COVID-19 in the country with a 38-year-old female Chinese national, and on March 7, 2020, the first local transmission of COVID-19 was confirmed. Those who were infected experienced illness while others recovered by treatments and isolation. In effect, this Pandemic affected the public and private education sectors worldwide, most especially on delivering learning and services -including library services. To prevent the COVID 19's spread and infections, schools fled from the regular face-to-face (f2f) learning into online. [Stern \(n.d.\)](#) defined online learning as education over the Internet. It is often referred to as "e-learning," among other terms. It made the libraries (print and non-print) and librarians shift almost fully to library online services. As mentioned by [Carroll \(2020\)](#), president of the American Association of School Librarians or AASL, in her column that, "The COVID slide is real, and school librarians must work with other educators to evaluate students and establish ways to supplement gaps in their education." Hence school librarians and libraries must re-evaluate how they deliver their services. However, these services must still support the academic needs of their clientele.

In the feature article of [Matteson \(2020\)](#), she shared her experiences of rendering library services during the Pandemic. As a result, she and her partner decided to flip their entire library orientation process into asynchronous and made Schoology their learning management system. Using a collection of instructional videos, automatically graded quizzes, and activities that test the mastery of certain skills, we have been able to teach all 600 students. On the other hand, SSC Manila launched its online learning program entitled: St. Scholastica's College Manila's Holistic Instruction and Formation through Technology or simply SHIFT for 2020-2021.

Furthermore, in the primer of the high school unit, the information regarding how the librarians of both print and non-print libraries could continue their services to support the curriculum and instructional support needs of the teachers and students. ([pp. 43-47](#)). The services mentioned in the primer for the library (print library) are the

1. Online Reservation of Books, wherein the library users are allowed to borrow resources from the library through the online reservation system of the library;
2. Book Borrowing for Pick-Up and Delivery, wherein library users who reserved their books online may have the books delivered to their homes or opt to pick them up at the school gate;
3. Talk to Ten-Ten: Library Assist, wherein the library users can directly avail of the librarian's assistance in real-time;
4. Electronic Document Delivery Service, wherein the library users can request for what part/s or chapter/s of the books need to be scanned and be sent online;
5. Research and Project Assistance and Path Finder, wherein the library users will be assisted in their research work and projects;
6. Online Library Instruction, wherein the library users will be taught how to use library facilities and resources thru online and

7. Subscription to E-Resources, wherein the library users will be given access to online research platforms, e-books, journals, and magazines suitable for their information needs.

While for the Audio Visual Center or AVC (non-print library), their services mentioned are the

1. Remote Access to Audio Visual Resources, wherein the patrons can access the music, movies, videos, photos, and documentaries digitally and may opt to have these resources be delivered to their homes or be picked up at school gate;
2. Access to Quality Multi-Media Streaming Services, wherein the patron's access video databases for learning and research needs; and
3. Production of Institutional and Unit Wide Webinars and Live Stream, patrons can watch school-based programs via official school social media accounts (e.g., Facebook and Youtube).

Indeed, school libraries and librarians have their ways to continue their operations. However, in the paper of [Morley \(2021\)](#), he discussed the difficulties and opportunities he encountered. From experiencing government cutbacks to layoffs and school closures, he discussed his feelings and frustrations about COVID-19 and how it prevented him from doing his job. It also heightened his isolation and loneliness in the job and highlighted the importance and need for human connection. With these given circumstances, the researcher thought of the questions, "How will the SSC Manila High School Librarians will describe their roles and responsibilities in delivering library online services during the COVID-19 pandemic?" as well as "How will the SSC Manila High School Librarians will describe their experiences in terms of challenges and opportunities in delivering library online services during COVID-19 pandemic?" With these in mind, the researcher pushed through with the study.

METHODS

The study used a descriptive research design to describe the roles, responsibilities, and challenges, and opportunities of SSC Manila School Librarians in delivering library online services during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The study respondents were chosen based on their professional background through purposive sampling, which are librarians employed at the High School unit of SSC Manila. Thus, four employed (4) High School librarians were asked to answer an electronic questionnaire. The researcher employed Document Analysis to the respondents' answers on the electronic questionnaires. [Bryman \(2003\)](#) argued that analyzing documents can bring multiple advantages to the qualitative research study. For example, he mentioned that documents could provide information on issues that cannot readily be addressed through other methods; they can check the validity of information deriving from other methods and contribute a different level of analysis from other methods. [Braun & Clarke \(2006\)](#) explained that thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes the data set in (rich) detail; thus, a thematic clustering of responses was used to analyze the perceived roles and responsibilities and the opportunities and challenges experiences of SSC Manila School Librarians delivering online library services during COVID-19 Pandemic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Data

Four librarians responded to the given electronic questionnaire. These respondents represented a broad range of experience. One librarian already served the institution for more than one decade, two librarians for more than two decades, and one librarian for three decades. All of them are Registered Librarians (RL) recognized by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC).

Obj. 1: To describe the experiences in terms of roles and responsibilities of SSC Manila High School Librarians in delivering library online services during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The first research question asked: "As a librarian, what do you think are your roles and responsibilities in supporting the Online Learning of the students and of teachers at the time of Pandemic? Why?" The respondents wrote their responses in essay form with two or more sentences to answer this question. Table 1 contains their responses.

Table 1. Roles and responsibilities of SSC Manila School Librarians in delivering library online services during COVID-19 Pandemic

Respondents	Responses
Librarian 1	<i>As a librarian, I have always focused on providing resources and technical services to our clients with or without Pandemic. I will continue to meet the AVC mission, goals, and objectives by collaborating with our faculty on the needed information and services the AVC can offer to meet the growing demands of online education.</i>
Librarian 2	<i>I believe that the librarian with or without the Pandemic serves the following roles in the teaching and learning environment of the school. First, as information specialists, we provide the teachers and students access to the world of information, advise them of new acquisitions, provide access to and retrieval of resources beyond the school through networking with other libraries, and most importantly, encourage them to develop lifelong reading and learning and second as a teacher we teach students knowledge, skills and attitudes in accessing information as an integral part of their curriculum, we provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to participate in the selection, use, and evaluation of resources.</i>
Librarian 3	<i>As a librarian, our foremost responsibility to our clients is to provide and give them the best resources they need during this time of Pandemic wherein they cannot go to school, and it is our extreme effort to reach out to them by answering their queries in the Google hangouts, informing them the new resources that the library acquires. In addition, the library also launched games and activities to encourage them to borrow books as a breather. Such games are the following: Race To Ten Challenge, while ongoing is the Pass The Book Challenge Students and Family, Teachers and Employees Edition to celebrate National Book Month this November.</i>
Librarian 4	<i>Librarians ensure that students' and teachers' online materials, resources, and tools are available. AVC helps the teachers use technical resources for online learning, and the library creates ways for the students to borrow books and use e-resources available. In the library, we have Educational games to encourage reading books, with the prize and more activities. We can be instructional partners. We can give orientation about the library and other information online if someone requests the Library Instructional Program or LIP. We may also provide bibliography information online - try our Follet. We have e-resources and other updated information about COVID. Overall, we render services online, at e-mail, students are updated with their accounts, and they can borrow library materials which can be picked up at Gate 1.</i>

Given their responses in question 1, the researcher employed thematic analysis to describe their perceived roles and responsibilities of SSC Manila School Librarians in delivering library online services during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The following themes emerged from their responses: Technologists, Online Learning Support Professionals, instructional partners, and game-based learning developers.

Table 2. Presentation of Themes regarding the Roles and responsibilities of SSC Manila School Librarians in delivering library online services during COVID-19 Pandemic

Respondents	Responses	Themes
Librarian 1	<i>As a librarian, I have always focused on providing resources and <u>technical services</u> to our clients with or without Pandemic.</i>	Technologists
Librarian 4	<i>AVC helps the teachers use technical resources for online learning, and the library creates ways for the students to borrow books and use e-resources available.</i>	

Respondents	Responses	Themes
Librarian 2	<i>First is as an information specialist, where <u>we provide the teachers and students access to the world of information, advise them of new acquisitions, provide access to and retrieval of resources</u> beyond the school through networking with other libraries, and most importantly, <u>encourage them to develop lifelong reading and learning</u></i>	Online Learning Support Professionals
Librarian 3	<i>As a librarian, our foremost responsibility to our clients is to <u>provide and give them the best resources</u> they need during this time of Pandemic wherein they cannot go to school; it is our extreme effort to reach out to them by <u>answering their queries in the Google hangouts, informing them the new resources that the library acquires.</u></i>	
Librarian 4	<i>Overall, <u>we render services online, at e-mail, students are updated with their accounts, and they can borrow library materials which can be picked up at Gate 1.</u></i>	
Librarian 2	<i>First is as an information specialist, where <u>we provide the teachers and students access to the world of information, advise them of new acquisitions, provide access to and retrieval of resources</u> beyond the school through networking with other libraries, and most importantly, <u>encourage them to develop lifelong reading and learning</u></i>	Online Learning Support Professionals
Librarian 3	<i>As a librarian, our foremost responsibility to our clients is to <u>provide and give them the best resources</u> they need during this time of Pandemic wherein they cannot go to school; it is our extreme effort to reach out to them by <u>answering their queries in the Google hangouts, informing them the new resources that the library acquires.</u></i>	
Librarian 4	<i>Overall, <u>we render services online, at e-mail, students are updated with their accounts, and they can borrow library materials which can be picked up at Gate 1.</u></i>	
Librarian 1	<i>I will continue to meet the AVC mission, goals, and objectives by <u>collaborating with our faculty on the needed information and services the AVC can offer to meet the growing demands of online education.</u></i>	Instructional Partners
Librarian 2	<i>second, <u>as a teacher, we teach students knowledge, skills, and attitudes in accessing information as an integral part of their curriculum; we provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to participate in selecting, using, and evaluating resources.</u></i>	
Librarian 4	<i><u>We can be instructional partners. For example, we can orientation the library and other information online if someone requests the Library Instructional Program or LIP.</u></i>	

Respondents	Responses	Themes
Librarian 3	<i>The library also launched games and activities to encourage them to borrow books as a breather. Such games are the following: Race To Ten Challenge, while ongoing is the Pass The Book Challenge Students and Family, Teachers and Employees Edition to celebrate National Book Month this November.</i>	Game-Based Learning Developers
Librarian 4	<i>In the library, we have Educational games to encourage reading books, with the prize and more activities.</i>	

Technologists

Since the AVC provides technical services such as video editing and video streaming for the students and teachers, librarians are considered technologists.

Online Learning Support Professionals

Providing electronic, print, and non-print resources, answering queries thru *Google Hangouts*, giving updates regarding the COVID 19 thru e-mails are the evidence why they are also categorized as Online Learning Support Professionals.

Instructional Partners

Collaborating with faculty members, providing opportunities for teachers and administrators to participate in the selection of materials and the use and evaluation of resources, and giving orientations and Library Instructional Program is the factors why they are also characterized as Instructional Partners.

Game-Based Learning Developers

To attract book borrowers, the librarians facilitated challenges such as the "Pass the Book challenge," wherein students and teachers were tasked to create and submit a video showing participants passing their favorite book to one another thru a compilation of video cuts. On the other note, the librarians also facilitated the "Race to Ten Challenge." It is a game wherein students must list ten possible references to answer a certain research question.

Example question: "If your research topic is about "COVID-19 and its impacts to Philippine Secondary Education," then what should be the ten references or sources that you will use from the library?" Whoever gives the list first, thru answering a *google form*, will get a prize. Librarians can also be Game-Based Learning Developers.

Obj. 2: To describe the experiences in terms of challenges and opportunities of SSC Manila High School Librarians in delivering library online services during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The second research question was posed as: "How will you describe your experiences in rendering Online Library or AVC services at the time of COVID-19 Pandemic? Why?". The respondents again wrote their responses in essay form with two or more sentences to answer this question. Table 2 contains their responses.

Table 3. The challenges and opportunities experienced by SSC Manila School Librarians in delivering library online services during COVID-19 Pandemic

Respondents	Responses
Librarian 1	<i>I am so blessed to work with my AVC team. We feel it worth doing our work. We know that our services contributed to the goal of our institution. We were able to help our teachers and students during this extraordinary time. The value of coordination and</i>

cooperation between our teachers and AVC staff appears very clear. The teachers understand what the AVC can offer, and the AVC staff understand what teachers need.

Librarian 2

At first, we were really worried about rendering our library programs without F2F interaction. However, when we brainstormed with our library group, we came up with programs and services suited for the new normal. I would say that this crisis brought imagination, creativity and challenged me to develop library programs and activities that can stimulate their reading abilities. Moreover, the crisis had been an avenue for us to learn new things we did not know about, especially regarding EdTech (Educational Technology), and then we tried, and luckily we succeeded.

Librarian 3

Challenging because we need to check every minute of the day the Follett Destiny - Library Management System, high school library e-mail account if there are students/faculty who want to make reservations of books, borrow library materials, and answer inquiries. The library staff is the ones packaging the books to be borrowed, while the borrower will be the one to shoulder the courier/ or to be picked up by the parents/representative within the radius of the school. At the same time, it is also worth doing because we have rendered our utmost service/s to our clients.

Librarian 4

Difficult and needs more time to prepare because we render services online. However, it is worth doing because we can help our students and faculty members with their needs.

The researcher employed thematic analysis again to describe their experiences in delivering library online services during the COVID-19 Pandemic based on their given responses on question 2. Overall, the following themes emerged from their responses: For the challenges, these are limited transaction and time constraints, while for the opportunities, these are proactive team culture and providing appropriate and innovative services.

Table 4. Presentation of Themes regarding the challenges and opportunities experienced by SSC Manila School Librarians in delivering library online services during COVID-19 Pandemic

Respondents	Responses	Themes
Librarian 1	<i>We were able to <u>help our teachers and students during this extraordinary time.</u></i>	Limited Transactions
Librarian 2	<i>At first, we were really worried about rendering <u>our library programs without F2F interaction.</u></i>	
Librarian 3	<i><u>Challenging because we need to check every minute of the day the Follett Destiny - Library Management System, high school library e-mail account if there are students/faculty who want to make reservations of books, borrow library materials, and answer inquiries.</u></i>	Time constraints
Librarian 4	<i><u>Difficult and needs more time to prepare because we render services online.</u></i>	
Librarian 1	<i><u>I am so blessed to work with my AVC team. We feel it worth doing our work. We know that our services contributed to the goal of our institution</u> <u>The value of coordination and cooperation between our teachers and AVC staff appears very clear.</u></i>	Proactive team culture
Librarian 2	<i><u>But when we had our brainstorming with our library group, we came up with programs and services suited for the new normal</u></i>	
Librarian 1	<i><u>The teachers understand what the AVC can offer, and the AVC staff understand what teachers need.</u></i>	Providing appropriate and innovative services
Librarian 2	<i><u>The crisis had been an avenue for us to learn new things we</u></i>	

Respondents	Responses	Themes
	<i>did not know about, especially regarding EdTech (Educational Technology), and then we tried, and luckily we succeeded.</i>	

Challenges:

Limited Transactions

Students and teachers can instantly go to the library and be given the service they need in face-to-face interaction. However, at the time of the COVID-19 Pandemic, since school transactions shifted into having online learning, librarians experienced having zero face-to-face interaction with their clientele. They know that not all of their services are still applicable to online transactions, so they need to choose what services will stay and need modification. There is also a tendency in an online set-up that their clients may experience technical difficulty with their gadgets, electricity disruption, or internet problems.

Time constraints

They also experienced little time to prepare for their online library services. An example can be providing educational videos to their clients, which need planning, editing, and uploading on websites or sending via e-mails. In addition, it also added to their work to check from time to time their *Follett Destiny* - Library Management System to be able for them to process the reservation of books made by the students and the teachers.

Opportunities

Proactive team culture

Fortunately, in this period, they experienced helping one another through brainstorming, coordinating, and cooperating as a team to actualize their plans for their library online services.

Providing appropriate and innovative services

With the changing times and demands of online learning, the library and librarians were still able to contribute to the institution's goal: providing quality education to the students and supporting the information needs of the faculty members through technology.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 Pandemic truly reshaped the way libraries and librarians provide services to their clientele. The high school librarians of St. Scholastica's College Manila, Philippines, are evidence that librarians must be adaptable and resourceful to continue their mission in supporting the information needs of students and faculty members, shifting from face-to-face interactions to library online transactions. Further, this study also showed the importance of the staff's role, because without them it would be harder to employ their services.

It was revealed, through this study, that the roles and responsibilities of the SSC Manila HS librarians were technologists, online learning support professionals, instructional partners, and game-based learning developers. On the other hand, they experienced challenges such as having limited transactions and time constraints in delivering library online services and the opportunities of having proactive team culture and providing appropriate and innovative services to their clientele.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With these findings, the following are recommended for better library online services of the school libraries and librarians. First, librarians and staff's technical competencies and skills must continuously be honed to provide more innovative services to their clientele. Second, the library's online services must also be evaluated annually by the students and faculty members so that the librarians and staff would be aware of their suggestions to improve them. Third, the librarians and staff must explore more technological applications or apps and learning management systems to maximize and strengthen their engagements with their clientele, hence providing more options for them to reach out to others.

Lastly, further research studies are recommended in relation also to delivering library online services that can be in the contexts of other types of libraries, most especially their experiences so that there will be a deeper and bigger understanding of the roles and responsibilities, and the challenges and opportunities of librarians during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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